

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Olive Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church

other names/site number Evangelische Friedens Gemeinde Lutheran Congregation

### 2. Location

street & number 309 South Harrison Avenue [n/a] not for publication

city or town Kirkwood [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county St. Louis County code 189 zip code 63122

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. ([ ] see continuation sheet for additional comments).

Mark A. Miles  
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles, Deputy SHPO

03/05/04  
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ([ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.  
    ☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined eligible for the  
    National Register.  
    ☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined not eligible for the  
    National Register.  
☐ removed from the National  
    Register.  
☐ other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Olive Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church  
Name of Property

St. Louis County, MO  
County and State

### 5. Classification

#### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

#### Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

#### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

#### Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic Resources of Kirkwood, Missouri

#### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

n/a

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

#### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY/Gothic Revival

#### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/Limestone

walls WOOD/Weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other GLASS

#### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☒ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☒ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

ETHNIC HERITAGE/Black

Period of Significance

1896-1899

1896-1968

Significant Dates

1896

1923

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Bopp, Peter, Contractor

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

St. Louis County, MO  
County and State

**Acreage of Property** less than 1 acre

☐ See continuation sheet

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

city or town Saint Louis state Missouri zip code 63109-3108

Submit the following items with the complete form:

**A Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Representative black and white photographs of the property.**

Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

city or town Kirkwood state Missouri zip code 63122

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Olive Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church  
St. Louis County, MO

### Narrative Description

#### SUMMARY

Located on the southwest corner of Harrison and Monroe Avenues in Kirkwood, a suburban community in metropolitan St. Louis, the Olive Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church is a one story, end gabled, side steepled, clapboard church building that faces east onto Harrison Avenue. It blends into a residential district southwest of the historic Kirkwood central business district and south of the Amtrak and Union Pacific Railroad track that bisects the community east to west. The area was much more rural when the church building was erected, but the residential area developed around it in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Built in the Gothic Revival style between 1896 and 1899, the frame building is approximately 31 by 60 feet in dimension. It has clapboard walls, a steeply pitched roof, boxed cornices, lancet windows on each side with delicate wood tracery and stained glass, as well as a large lancet window on the facade with a corner belfry that forms the entry and steeple at the northeast corner. The church building is in very good condition on the exterior with the original clapboard siding and wood shingle siding on the upper portion of the belfry and gable ends. It currently has an asphalt composition shingle roof, but originally probably had a wood shingle roof. The original bell tower, bell, stained glass windows and front doors still grace the building. Improvements include the small addition on the rear for modern restrooms and the excavation and completion of the basement, neither of which alter the appearance from either Harrison or Monroe Avenues. The interior of the sanctuary retains many of its original features, including the pews, electric lights and ceiling fans (added in the early twentieth century), although the congregation opted to reverse the pews in 1978 to face the large stained glass window on the front of the church. Except for minor visual changes to accommodate modern conveniences and access to the building, all at the rear of the building, this church building retains a high degree of historic integrity.

#### Exterior

The facade of the church building parallels Harrison Avenue with a large stained glass window with elaborate wood tracery set within a lancet opening extending into the gable end above the cornice returns. While most of this elevation is clapboard with corner boards, above the window, the gable end is wood shingled. The rock faced ashlar limestone foundation is not visible below the drip mold due to ground plantings.

On the northeast corner of the facade is a large, two story, square bell tower that projects beyond both the main facade and the north elevation. This tower has the original metal clad cross at its peak, a design that is characteristically German. There are modillions around the base of the boxed cornice. The upper level of this two story tower is clad in wood shingles, with a break provided halfway up by molding that continues as a window hood around the lancet window openings on the east, north and west elevations of the second floor. These are not windows, but louvered openings with tracery to mirror that of the first floor stained glass windows of the church, including the one on the first floor, north elevation of the belfry. The wood shingles flare at the division between the first and second floor visually separating the upper level from the clapboard first floor.

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Olive Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church  
St. Louis County, MO

### Narrative Description (continued)

The original entry to the church (no longer used, but retained intact), is located on the east elevation of the belfry in another lancet opening that has heavily molded framing and paired wood paneled entry doors. The doors have paired lancet arched, recessed panels above two horizontally stacked rectangular recessed panels in each door. The entry even retains its original porcelain knob. Above the doors, the transom includes the banner "A.M.E. OLIVE CHAPEL" in a field of geometric shapes of stained glass that outline the Gothic arch, wording that was probably added when the congregation made repairs to the stained glass windows in 1946-1948. The four flagstone steps span the doorway and appear to be a more recent replacement but are in keeping with the simple treatment of the entry.

The original, molded steel bell is mounted on sturdy beams in the belfry with a trap door and ropes visible in the ceiling of the entry. The bell weighs approximately 1700 pounds, being 44 inches in diameter, tolling in the key of "F." The C. S. Bell Foundry in Hillsboro, Ohio manufactured it using a wax mold, making it one-of-a-kind. Based upon the Architectural/Historic Inventory Form completed by St. Louis County in 1981 and updated in 1999, Mr. Richard Lauwerens, District Manager of Verdin Company of Cincinnati, Ohio had inspected the bell and tower. He noted that the bell and striker are both in good condition, with the markings on the bell indicating its manufacturer.

Each side elevation has four lancet arched windows evenly spaced in the clapboard walls below three triangular, louvered, eyebrow dormers that are spaced between the windows. The windows are noted for their elegant wood tracery and original stained glass designs as well as the heavy molding around each window. At the very rear of the north elevation is a pair of newer wood slab doors with a round arched, canvas awning and concrete steps with iron railings leading down to a concrete sidewalk to provide access to the building from Monroe Avenue. On the south elevation, there was originally another lancet opening for a doorway, positioned at the rear corner, the top of which is still visible behind a small, one story, clapboard clad, frame wing. Probably added in the 1930s when the basement was finished, this small wing now provides ground level access and a staircase to the basement. This addition has a low pitched hipped roof with the door facing east next to the original building and on its rear, the west elevation is a small wood sashed window.

The rear or west elevation of the building was always unadorned except for the boxed cornice returns and the central, interior brick chimney, which originally connected to the pot-belly stove used to heat the building. The gable end is clad in the original wood shingle siding with clapboards below. A one story, gabled addition was added across this rear elevation in 1955 to accommodate modern bathrooms and it has concrete block walls with wood clapboards in the gable ends. There is a one over one, wood sashed window centered under the peak of the gable with new, replacement steel paneled doors near each end of the west elevation of the addition. On both the north and south sides of this addition are additional, one over one, wood sashed windows with concrete sills.

### Interior

The interior of the church building is primarily one room, the sanctuary, with a small entry hall across the back. The sanctuary has plaster walls and high Gothic arched, vaulted ceiling that merge together. Because of damage to the lower walls, wood paneling has been added below the original chair rails, which also serve as the window

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### Narrative Description (continued)

sills. The elegant window tracery and stained glass windows on both sides and at the east end of the sanctuary dominate the simple interior. Although some of the original stained glass panes had been broken and replaced with clear glass in the early twentieth century, the Olive Chapel congregation raised money to restore the windows in 1946-1948. At that time, they added the names of the contributors to the glass panels at the bottom of each window to commemorate the improvement. The simple ceiling fans at the ridge near the front and rear of the sanctuary, as well as the hexagonal pendant lights appear to be an early twentieth century improvement and the two brass chandeliers are known to date from the early 1920s. The wood pews are original, but have been reversed to face the rose window on the east end of the sanctuary. At the northeast corner, the room is clipped, with paired wood panel doors leading into the bell tower. Above these doors are two, staggered, access panels to the belfry, although the lower one appears to have been modified. At the rear, on each side are five paneled wood doors with double back band trim that matches the windows. The floor has been carpeted, but it retains the original three member baseboards. The pulpit was modified in recent years, probably in 1978 when the decaying balcony was removed and the pews reversed. In the middle is a newer doorway with paired doors that lead into the addition where there are restrooms on the main level.

The small wing at the southwest corner of the building provides concrete stairs into the basement, which was first finished in the 1930s, having previously been little more than a coal storage room since the sanctuary was heated by a pot belly stove. The basement was remodeled in 1978 with a deeper, poured concrete floor that increased the height by of the basement walls by three feet. There is a large meeting room space and a kitchen in the basement today.

### ALTERATIONS AND INTEGRITY ISSUES

Few changes had been made to the church building between 1899 and 1923 when Olive Chapel purchased the church from the Peace Congregation. The building had been empty for a few years and some of the original panes of stained glass had been broken and replaced with clear glass. One of the earliest changes known was the expansion and finishing of a basement in the 1930s and the restoration of the stained glass windows in 1946-1948. It was probably at that time that the banner in the entry transom was changed to read "A.M.E. OLIVE CHAPEL" but it could have occurred earlier. Recently, clear storm window panels have been added to protect the stained glass windows. In 1955 and 1978 small additions were added on the southwest corner with interior basement stairs and across the rear for modern restrooms, heating and air-conditioning. In 1978, the basement floor was repoured, lowering it three feet and finishing the kitchen and meeting space on that level. At the same time, the decaying balcony (choir loft) in the sanctuary was removed and the pews reversed to face the large stained glass window on the east elevation. These changes have only minimally impacted the exterior streetscape appearance of the church, since the additions are relegated to the rear. The exterior retains a high degree of historic integrity with its original clapboard and wood shingle walls, the original lancet, stained glass windows with wood tracery, the original paired entry doors, and even the original modillions and metal clad cross on the bell tower. The bell itself is the original steel bell, still used by the congregation, and the sanctuary retains its original plastered walls and ceilings, oak floors (currently covered by carpet), woodwork, and pews. Although the pulpit has been changed and the balcony are missing from the interior, the interior also retains the sense of volume and light filtered by the original stained glass windows that distinguished the original design.

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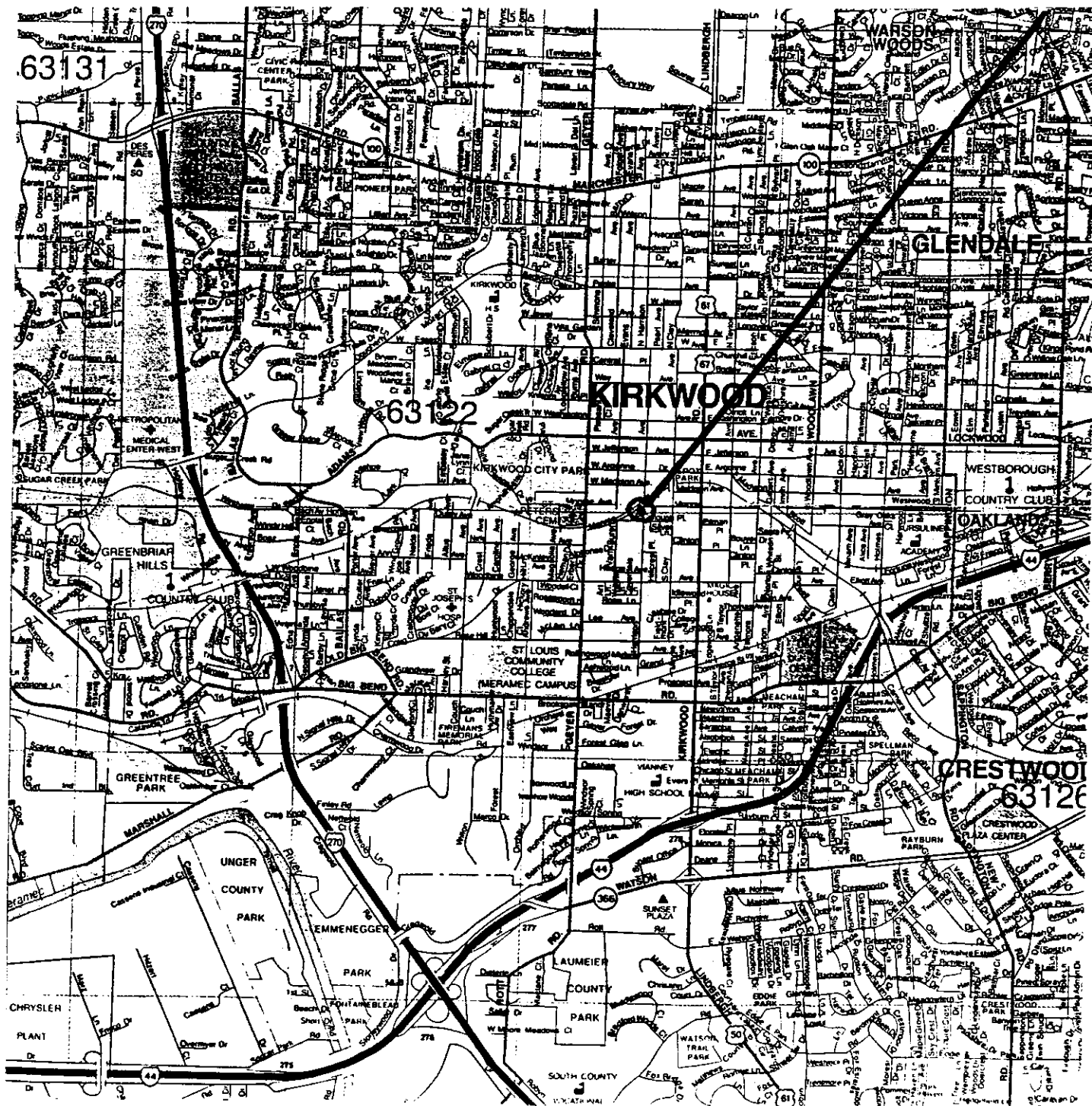
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Olive Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church  
St. Louis County, MO

Map of Metropolitan St. Louis, MO

Locating Property







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Olive Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church  
St. Louis County, MO

### Narrative Statement of Significance

#### SUMMARY

Built between 1896 and 1899, the Olive Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, located at 309 South Harrison Avenue, Kirkwood, St. Louis County, Missouri, is locally significant under Criterion C: Architecture, and under Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage-Black for its long association with Kirkwood's African-American community. Begun in 1896 by Peter Bopp and other members of the Evangelische Friedens Gemeinde Lutheran Congregation (which was also known as the Peace Congregation), the church was completed in 1899 and used it for their meeting hall and for their services for the next twenty-four years. It was designed in the Gothic Revival style, specifically the Carpenter Gothic style, which was especially popular for smaller churches, into the late nineteenth century. It is noted for its simple side steeple form, clapboard walls, and lancet windows with wood tracery and the original stained glass windows. In 1923, Peace Congregation sold the building to the Olive Chapel A. M. E. Church. This became one of the most important locations in Kirkwood's African-American community both as the new home of the Olive Chapel and as the meeting location for various community organizations. The congregation already had a distinguished history in the pre-Civil War era in the effort to end slavery and to form A. M. E. churches throughout the south. In its new home the Olive Chapel A. M. E. Church continues to serve as a symbol of that struggle as well as postbellum agitation for civil and equal rights. The congregation built upon this legacy in their new home serving as one of the few available meeting locations for the various African-American organizations in Kirkwood, including youth groups, civic organizations and civil rights groups, during the period prior to desegregation in Kirkwood. Because of its congregations longstanding leadership and use of this building in promoting educational, economic, and civic equality for the local African-American community, the Olive Chapel is exceptionally significant under Criterion Consideration G, with its period of significance extending through 1968 as the year of the last major civil rights meeting at the church, a spontaneous gathering converging on the chapel to mourn the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King.<sup>1</sup>

#### BUILDING HISTORY

This simple carpenter Gothic church was started in 1896 by the Evangelische Friedens Gemeinde Lutheran Congregation after a schism in the Concordia Lutheran Church caused a group of its members to break away and start their own congregation.<sup>2</sup> The members of the new congregation, also known as the Peace Congregation, were mostly German immigrants. Most new congregation members were construction workers and, under the leadership of Peter Bopp, donated much of the labor on the Carpenter Gothic style church, including the stained glass Gothic windows made with wood tracery. The molded steel bell, still in use today, was ordered from C. S. Bell Foundry in Hillsboro, Ohio, a company that was well known for its school bells. The bell was delivered by riverboat to St. Louis and then to Kirkwood by train and by cart to Harrison Avenue. The Peace Congregation completed the building in 1899 and continued to use it for services and congregational meetings for the next twenty-four years. In 1923, the schism between the Evangelische Friedens Gemeinde Lutheran Congregation and the Concordia Lutheran Church ended and the two congregations reunited under the Concordia Lutheran Church. The Evangelische Friedens Gemeinde Lutheran Congregation sold the building to the Olive Chapel A. M. E. Congregation for \$20,000.<sup>3</sup> Olive Chapel A. M. E. used the building for Sunday services, congregation meetings, church social functions, as well as a public meeting hall. The Olive Chapel

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congregation continues to use the Olive Chapel today for the same functions. The building has had some minor modifications, the most extensive of which was reorienting the pews so that the congregation faces the stained glass windows during the services, a change which took place in the early 1978. The stained glass had also been damaged in the early twentieth century and a collection was started in 1946 with enough money raised by 1948 to replace the pieces of stained glass that had been broken and previously replaced with clear glass.

Olive Chapel stands alongside other significant churches in the Kirkwood area as one of only three remaining nineteenth century edifices. Kirkwoodians worshiped at Grace Episcopal Church which beginning in 1854, and by 1860 constructed their building at 106 S. Taylor (listed on the National Register of Historic Places), although the congregation no longer uses the building, having sold it in 1960 to Eliot Unitarian Chapel. Another early church was also established solely for African-American residents of Kirkwood in 1878, the Unity Baptist Church at 328 S. Taylor Avenue, and they still hold services in their 1880 building, although its historic appearance was altered when it was stuccoed around 1920. It too reflects a simple Gothic style, with its Gothic arched windows and entry, but it does not have the steeply pitched roof and steeple that characterize the Olive Chapel A. M. E. Church.<sup>4</sup>

Olive Chapel is an excellent example of a Carpenter Gothic variation of the Gothic Revival style popular in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century and as such is significant under Criterion C: Architecture. It is the only example of Carpenter Gothic in Kirkwood. Gothic Revival had been popularized in churches and country cottages, utilizing Gothic architectural elements as its basis. Notable urban examples include the Trinity Church (1839-1846) designed by Richard Upjohn and Saint Patrick's Cathedral (1858-1879) by James Renwick, both in New York City. Its application on country cottages across the nation was stimulated by the pattern books of Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852). In this same tradition, Olive Chapel was constructed of wood, designed by its builders and carpenters, and thus aptly named Carpenter Gothic, an important variant of the Gothic Revival that was frequently used for simple churches. Like most Gothic Revival buildings, Olive Chapel exhibits the distinguishing feature of a steeply pitched gabled roof, but as a vernacular example, it does not have the highly ornate bargeboards often associated with more elaborate Carpenter Gothic churches. Its most distinctive Gothic Revival features are the lancet windows on each side of the building as well as the large lancet window on the facade that extends into the gable. Even the use of the lancet arch on the entry door is characteristic of this style along with the elegant wood tracery and original stained glass windows which attest to the skill of the carpenters who built this church. Like other Carpenter Gothic churches, the plan is asymmetrical with a side steeple dominating the street corner of the facade. Even its lancet openings into the belfry, the simple modillions at the boxed cornice, and the visual division of the steeple with shingles on its upper level are all characteristic of Carpenter Gothic churches. Although this style was most popular prior to 1880, its popularity continued into the late nineteenth century, especially for vernacular church designs as is evidenced by the Olive Chapel's construction in 1896.<sup>5</sup>

### PEACE CONGREGATION HISTORY

Before taking on its significance as the Olive Chapel A. M. E. Church, the building was the site of the Evangelische Friedensische Gemeinde Lutheran Congregation, or Peace Congregation. This congregation formed

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Olive Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church  
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after seventeen members of the Concordia Lutheran Church, including all but two of charter members, split away from that original congregation resulting from arguments with the minister of the church, Reverend Christian Volk. The argument began over the confirmation of a daughter of a prominent member, Peter Bopp. Volk's schism soon extended to a larger portion of the congregation. Two church elders asked a Circuit Counselor to visit and settle congregational problems. The complaints centered around Volk's use of non-Biblical stories to illustrate and illuminate doctrinal points, as well as his ways of explaining some of the church doctrines and even what hymns were chosen for services during the Lenten season. Circuit Counselor Miessler and district president, C.C. Schmidt reviewed the concerns. After hearing the complaints, Miessler and Schmidt decided that although some of Volk's statements were unwise or incorrect, no false doctrine or a failure of duty was involved. For example, the president found that Volk's use of Napoleon as an example of "pride goeth before the fall" with the addendum that "this proverb must be a thorn in the ear of the complainers" was unwise.<sup>6</sup>

Volk retaliated with a series of heavy-handed accusations pointing out the pride and hypocrisy of congregants in attempting to tell the minister how to care for his flock. Not surprisingly, the congregation then passed a motion to remove Volk from office.

At another Voter's Meeting, Andrew Thoma, one of the founding members of the congregation, presented Concordia's officers with a statement of withdrawal signed by many of the most prominent members of the congregation. According to their statement, the group withdrew "not because of Minister Volk, but because of the injustice against him and us in the dealings."<sup>7</sup> Apparently, a reconciliation had been reached between Volk and almost 100 churchgoers. Within two weeks, this splinter group, led by Peter Bopp, was holding meetings to form the Evangelische Friedens Gemeinde Lutheran Congregation, or Peace Congregation, with Reverend Volk as their pastor. The new congregation affiliated itself with the Ohio Synod of the Lutheran Church while continuing to use the Missouri Synod hymnal and altar books.

The new congregation started building their church in 1896. Directed by Peter Bopp, the congregation did much of the work on the new building themselves and by 1899 the church was completed and was dedicated. The Peace Congregation's church building continued to serve its members for the next two decades, but by the early 1920s, the schism was thawing. In 1923 Evangelische Friedens Gemeinde Lutheran Congregation disbanded to rejoin its parent congregation. The Evangelische Friedens Gemeinde Lutheran Congregation sold their building to the Olive Chapel A. M. E. Church.<sup>8</sup>

### AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN KIRKWOOD'S HISTORY

The Multiple Property Document from the National Register of Historic Places describes Kirkwood as a significant planned railroad suburb for the period beginning with its inception in 1851. The 1860 Census records 1,865 "free colored persons" living in St. Louis County, compared to 4,346 slaves. Numerous prominent families in Kirkwood did not believe in slavery. This progressive aristocratic culture that developed in Kirkwood allowed many freed African-Americans to form a strong community. Writing in the 1960s, Kirkwood historian June Dahl described these black domestic servants as "free persons who were paid for their services."<sup>9</sup> Oral history suggests that this nucleus of a community was capable of making a significant contribution to the Underground Railroad, with the Kirkwood A. M. E. playing an essential role as a meeting place for such efforts.

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Olive Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church  
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Despite these progressive elements, after the Civil War the community continued to segregate races with limited opportunities for social and economic access for African-Americans. Historian Patricia McKissack recalls the social dynamics of Kirkwood, her hometown in the mid-twentieth century. Kirkwood, she remembers, was less geographically segregated, with colored and whites living in the same neighborhoods. There was not an isolated colored neighborhood as in other parts of metropolitan Saint Louis.<sup>10</sup> Yet socially and economically, there was little interaction. Specifically, public institutions like schools often restricted and segregated African-Americans in the same ways they did throughout the state. African-Americans developed their own small institutions that provided spiritual and social outlets as well as community services. The Olive Chapel played a central role in providing a venue for nurturing these institutions as well as leading the local struggle for integration and equality.

### EARLY AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH HISTORY

The African Methodist Episcopal Church started as an offspring of the Wesley Methodist Church in Philadelphia in 1816. Prior to that year, both free blacks and slaves customarily worshiped in white churches, although often in a separate section and at a different time. Richard Allen, a free man and ordained minister in Philadelphia, regularly attended services at St. George's Methodist Church. When the church leaders decided African-American members could no longer pray at the altar with the white members of the congregation, Allen lead a walkout. He and other religious leaders began holding services in a blacksmith's shop and later built the Bethel Church in Philadelphia for the newly formed congregation. Allen formally broke with the Methodist Church in 1816 and the A. M. E. Church was officially formed.<sup>11</sup>

The newly formed A. M. E. Church sent out missionaries to establish new churches among the African-American population throughout the country. One of the most prolific of the missionaries was Paul Quinn, who traveled throughout the south successfully starting a number of congregations, even after South Carolina and other states outlawed the A. M. E. Church. Quinn continued his missionary work heading west where he also started new churches in Brooklyn, Illinois and Saint Louis, Missouri. It was while working in the Saint Louis area that Quinn met Reverend Jordan W. Early, who would later found the Olive Chapel Church.

### OLIVE CHAPEL'S EARLY HISTORY

Established in 1853, the Kirkwood African Methodist Church was the first protestant church in Kirkwood and the oldest and only antebellum African-American church in Kirkwood. The new congregation originally had a meeting-place in the home of Mariah Dunn, located at 330 West Washington Avenue in Kirkwood, Missouri.<sup>12</sup> The old stone walls have been incorporated into a larger home today,, with the second floor and rear addition enveloping the original church structure. Apparently the name Olive Chapel was adopted when the congregation moved into their new quarters at 309 S. Harrison. But for the sake of clarity the congregation is referred to as Olive Chapel throughout this discussion.

Olive Chapel had several important early leaders that served religious needs as well as being role models to their community. As the African-American community struggled to abolish slavery and achieve political and social

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equality after the Civil War, these leaders proved essential. For the Olive Chapel, three of the most prominent of these early ministers were Reverend Early, Moses Dickson, and Reverend John W. Wheeler:

- ◆ Reverend Early became a missionary for the A. M. E. Church and started traveling throughout the country to start new congregations. Early established congregations in New Orleans, Louisiana; St. Joseph and Booneville, Missouri; Dubuque and Burlington, Iowa; and Galena, Illinois. By the 1850s, Reverend Jordan W. Early was back in the Saint Louis area and decided to settle there. He continued to establish congregations in Saint Louis County but wanted to preach to the same congregation on a regular basis. The first of the churches Early established in the Saint Louis area was in Carondelet in 1851. Two years later, in 1853, Early established another church in Saint Louis County, this time in Kirkwood in the church that was later named Olive Chapel. Olive Chapel started with ten to twelve members under Reverend Early's guidance and grew quickly, so that in a short time the congregation's numbers were such that trustees were elected stewards and elders were appointed and a Sabbath School was opened.<sup>13</sup>
- ◆ In 1868 Olive Chapel's third minister was Moses Dickson, a dynamic leader in the broad struggle for equality. His achievements beyond Olive Chapel are numerous, including being a founder of an Underground Railroad network and a conductor on the routes slaves used to escape to the north. He was also a founder of the International Order of Twelve Knights and Daughters of Tabor, a society dedicated to the spread of Christianity and the abolition of slavery. His reputation as a community leader and social reformer was well established by the time he became the minister for the A. M. E. congregation in Carondelet, before going on to guide the Olive Chapel flock in 1868. Although his tenure was short, only two years, Dickson's influences on Olive Chapel were long lasting and helped contribute to the growth of the congregation tremendously, setting a high standard for social activism and encouraging the congregation's activities for educational and political equality. During Dickson's two years as the minister for the Olive Chapel A. M. E. Congregation, he had been instrumental in opening the first public school for African-American children in Kirkwood. The school moved a year after it opened to its permanent location in what was later known as the Booker T Washington School. He was also active politically, as a lobbyist in Jefferson City, advocating separate but equal educational policies, as a founder of the Lincoln Institute and in pushing for the fifteenth amendment to the U. S. Constitution assuring blacks' the right to vote.<sup>14</sup>
- ◆ Yet another of Olive Chapel's early notable ministers was the Reverend John W. Wheeler, who preached there for about a year in 1895. Wheeler was a well-known civil rights activist and was an active member of the Republican Party, receiving patronage jobs from the party. Wheeler was known as an activist minister who called on the African-American community to patronize each other's businesses in order to spur development and raise moral and living standards. He was often compared to Booker T. Washington. Wheeler worked as the overseer of the city's street cleaners, a powerful patronage position, until 1893, and received an appointment as the sergeant-at-arms in the city's House of Delegates from 1898 until 1900. Wheeler left his duties as a part-time minister to concentrate on his work as editor, from 1897 until 1911, of the *Saint Louis Palladium*. The African-American monthly newspaper was founded in 1884 and became a weekly in 1898 under his leader-

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ship. Although he was the minister for the Olive Chapel A. M. E. Church for a short time, his political activism and his tireless work agitating for civil rights for African-Americans continued a long tradition of activist ministers who looked after not only their immediate flock but also for the larger African-American community.<sup>15</sup>

### OLIVE CHAPEL AS MEETING HALL

The Olive Chapel A. M. E. Church continued to make contributions to the community after they moved into their new building in 1923, although the ministers of the congregation are not as well known as some of those in the late nineteenth century. The church continued the traditions both through their religious ministries and by working for equality for African-Americans, especially in education and economic opportunities. The Olive Chapel A. M. E. congregation made their church building available for a number of organizations that regularly met in the building. The Olive Chapel hosted the annual African Methodist Episcopal regional conference, which drew participants from all A. M. E. churches west of the Mississippi.<sup>16</sup> It originally met annually in the Olive Chapel building but as the A. M. E. regional conference grew it relocated to conference facilities, still meeting in the St. Louis metropolitan area due to the historic significance of Olive Chapel in the A. M. E. These conferences allowed the ministers to meet with the bishops and elders of the church to discuss theological questions and to make sure that the A. M. E. Church as an entire organization was developing consistently. The conferences also offered the various congregations an opportunity to discuss their social programs as well as the spiritual concerns. The church building itself was used not only for religious services, but as a meeting hall for the community. During segregation, the African-American population in Kirkwood had few public halls available for social organizations and community meetings. Turner School was available, with the other available meeting places being the Olive Chapel and Unity Baptist Church buildings. The A. M. E. Church was still very active in the civil rights movement, both at Olive Chapel Congregation and around the rest of the country, and the congregations would help one another with their united efforts to bring about equality for all African-Americans.

Two senior members of Olive Chapel recently recounted social activity during the 1930's and 40's. William Slaten is a senior member whose father was also a member, and Theodore Brown is a 94 year old member who joined the Olive Chapel in 1937.<sup>17</sup> These two gentlemen recall the Drama Club that put on plays for the public. Although the works were often Biblical in nature, the events drew a broad audience and can be seen as serving a broader social need beyond religion. These activities gave African-Americans a social outlet at a time when there were few options for African-Americans and illustrate Olive Chapel's significance under Criterion A: Ethnic Heritage, Black. At this time, theaters and movies were not open to African-Americans. Local congregation members such as playwright Lillian Phillips and musical director Lucius Webb created these events. The Drama Club functioned until the 1950s, although it encouraged several other interesting social clubs. During the 1940's a Literary Club was organized as a social outlet for blacks who could not attend lectures. They were responsible for several other spin-off organizations such as the Clickers Camera Club and a young adult club.

After the flu epidemic of 1918 the Widows Club was started in the 1940's by a group of church women who organized outreach activities for widowed women and children in the community. The group held fundraisers

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to pay for their activities. Living members today remember this group fondly, as they instilled a sense of volunteerism and altruism in young people.<sup>18</sup>

George Davis and other church members founded the Olive Chapel Civic Club, which was primarily focused on education reform in the 1940s. The group served a crucial role in Kirkwood's desegregation efforts prior to 1954, when the separate but equal policy still applied to schools in states that had segregation. The club was not only trying to encourage education, but also civil rights at a time when the civil rights movement was looking towards education and the school system as a key aspect to achieving equal rights and ending segregation in society.<sup>19</sup> As the group became more political in nature, it changed its name to the Kirkwood Civic Club, even though the group was still very much tied to the Olive Chapel, usually meeting there. In October 1950 the group published an open letter protesting the closing of the Booker Washington School on the grounds that it neglected the colored children of Kirkwood by not providing them with adequate educational facilities.<sup>20</sup> A lawsuit was filed against the Kirkwood School Board for unequal facilities and the closing of Booker T. Washington School. The attorney for the suit, Margaret Bush Wilson, would also work with the NAACP in its efforts that resulted in the *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, a Supreme Court decision that led to desegregation in all schools in the United States and as a direct result led to integration of Kirkwood's schools in 1954.

Opening its doors to a number of youth groups such as the Boy Scouts and the YWCA-Teens, the Olive Chapel A. M. E. Church made it possible for African-American children to take advantage of these organizations at a time when they would not have had the opportunity to meet without the use of the church building. African-Americans were able to use Turner School, but demand for space and scheduling restraints made it a crowded choice. Without Olive Chapel, organizations such as the Civic Group would also have to have been meeting at Turner School, adding to its scheduling demands. Adult civil rights groups would more readily be able to reserve a space for a meeting than would a children's organization working on less serious activities and children's activities would have suffered.<sup>21</sup>

Olive Chapel also served the broader African-American community in other ways. Hemphill Funeral Home was located on Filmore Ave beginning in the 1940s and possibly the late 1930s. Owner Mr. Hemphill was the only black undertaker in Kirkwood and had a special relationship with the Olive Chapel. The Olive Chapel and Mr. Hemphill would provide services for to unfortunate souls within the African-American community who happened not to have a church when they died but wanted a funeral service held in a church.

Olive Chapel A. M. E. Church continued to host various organizations besides the congregation itself through the 1960's. Olive Chapel even opened its doors to a Veteran of Foreign Wars post until they built their own building. The Chapel opened its doors to the entire African-American population of Kirkwood and the surrounding communities. An organization that needed a meeting hall did not have to be affiliated with the A. M. E. Church in order to use the building; they just had to ask if it was available. During the mid-1960s, the civil rights movement began to gain momentum and the Olive Chapel continued to be important meeting place for many of the groups, like it was for the Kirkwood Civic Group that railed against the injustices of school segregation a decade earlier. As the groups in the 60's were organizing demonstrations and protests in conjunction with the civil rights movement, small meetings of leaders met regularly but needed to occasionally have a larger public meeting. It would not be practical, and in some cases not even possible, for these groups to



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have their own meeting hall or to use a government building like Turner School. The Olive Chapel was used as a meeting hall that allowed civil rights organizations to reach more people at once and have more support for the meetings. Olive Chapel was an excellent fit not only because the congregation allowed civic organizations, whether connected to the A. M. E. Church or not, to use their building free of charge, but also because the church itself was dedicated towards working for equality and equal rights for the African-American community.<sup>22</sup>

As these activities illustrate, Olive Chapel is extremely important as a religious and social institution for Kirkwood's African-American community, as seen in its contributions to the civil rights struggle, which continued until the spontaneous gathering in the church in 1968 that mourned the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. The building also represents a significant example of Carpenter Gothic, the only known example in Kirkwood.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Patricia McKissack, Oral interview conducted by Matthew A. Cerny on September 30, 2003.

<sup>2</sup>Rev. Clarence H. Bopp, *History of Concordia Lutheran Church Kirkwood, Missouri, 1874-1994*, edited by James C. McAllister, Kirkwood, MO : Concordia Lutheran Church, 1994, 5.

<sup>3</sup>Rev. Clarence H. Bopp, *History of Concordia Lutheran Church Kirkwood, Missouri, 1874-1994*, edited by James C. McAllister, Kirkwood, MO: : Concordia Lutheran Church, 1994, 5, 6; "Welcome to the Olive Chapel," (pamphlet) Saint Louis: Olive Chapel, 2000.

<sup>4</sup>Early, 21,40-41; Olive Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church. "1899-1999 Centennial Celebration: A Century of Faithful Service, February 26-28, 1999," 7; Kirkwood Landmarks Commission, *Historic Kirkwood Landmarks*, Kirkwood: Kirkwood Landmarks Commission, 2001, 6, 14, and 21; Dr. John A. Wright, edited by Dione Scollay, Shirley Wittner, Carol Shoults, *Saint Louis: Black Heritage Trail*, Saint Louis: Ferguson-Florissant School District, 1990, 59-60.

<sup>5</sup>John G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945*, revised edition (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1981), 30-31; Herbert Gottfried and Jan Jennings, *American Vernacular Design, 1870-1940, an Illustrated Glossary* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1985), 253; Cyril M. Harris, *American Architecture, An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1998), 48,154-157.

<sup>6</sup>Bopp, 4-5.

<sup>7</sup>Bopp, 5.

<sup>8</sup>Bopp, 3-6; June Wilkinson Dahl, *A History of Kirkwood Missouri, 1851-1965*, Kirkwood: The Kirkwood Historical Society, 1965,254; Linda Briggs-Harty, "Kirkwood's Religious Community 'Essential' to Vitality of the City," *Webster-Kirkwood Times*, 9 May-15 May, 2003, 11-K.

<sup>9</sup>National Register of Historic Places, Multiple Property Documentation Form.

<sup>10</sup>McKissack, oral interview conducted by Matthew Cerny, September 30, 2003.

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<sup>11</sup> Larry Murphy, ed., *Encyclopedia of African-American Religions*, New York: Harland Publishing, 1993, Q-R, no page; Olive Chapel A. M. E. Church. "1899-1999 Centennial Celebration: A Century of Faithful Service, February 26-28, 1999," Kirkwood: Olive Chapel A. M. E. Church, 1999, 7, Kevin Murphy, "Olive Chapel: Serving God and Man since 1896, Webster-Kirkwood Times, 27 March- 9 April, 1980, 3.

<sup>12</sup> "Welcome to the Olive Chapel."

<sup>13</sup> Olive Chapel A. M. E. Church. "1899-1999 Centennial Celebration: A Century of Faithful Service, February 26-28, 1999," 7; Sarah J.W. Early, *Life and Labors of Reverend Jordan W. Early*, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971, 21.

<sup>14</sup> John A. Wright, Sr., *Black History, Saint Louis No Crystal Stair*, edited by Chyrel Lanos, Saint Louis: Ferguson-Florissant School District, 1988, 16-17.

<sup>15</sup> Christensen, 539-547.

<sup>16</sup> Patricia McKissack, oral interview conducted by Matthew Cerny on September 30, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Patricia McKissack's oral interview of William Slaten and Theodore Brown during 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Patricia McKissack, oral interview conducted by Matthew Cerny on September 30, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Patricia McKissack, oral interview conducted by Timothy Maloney on 1 July 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Kirkwood Civil Club, *The Kirkwood View*, Volume 3, Number 4, 2 October 1950.

<sup>21</sup> McKissack, oral interview conducted by Timothy Maloney on 1 July 2003.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

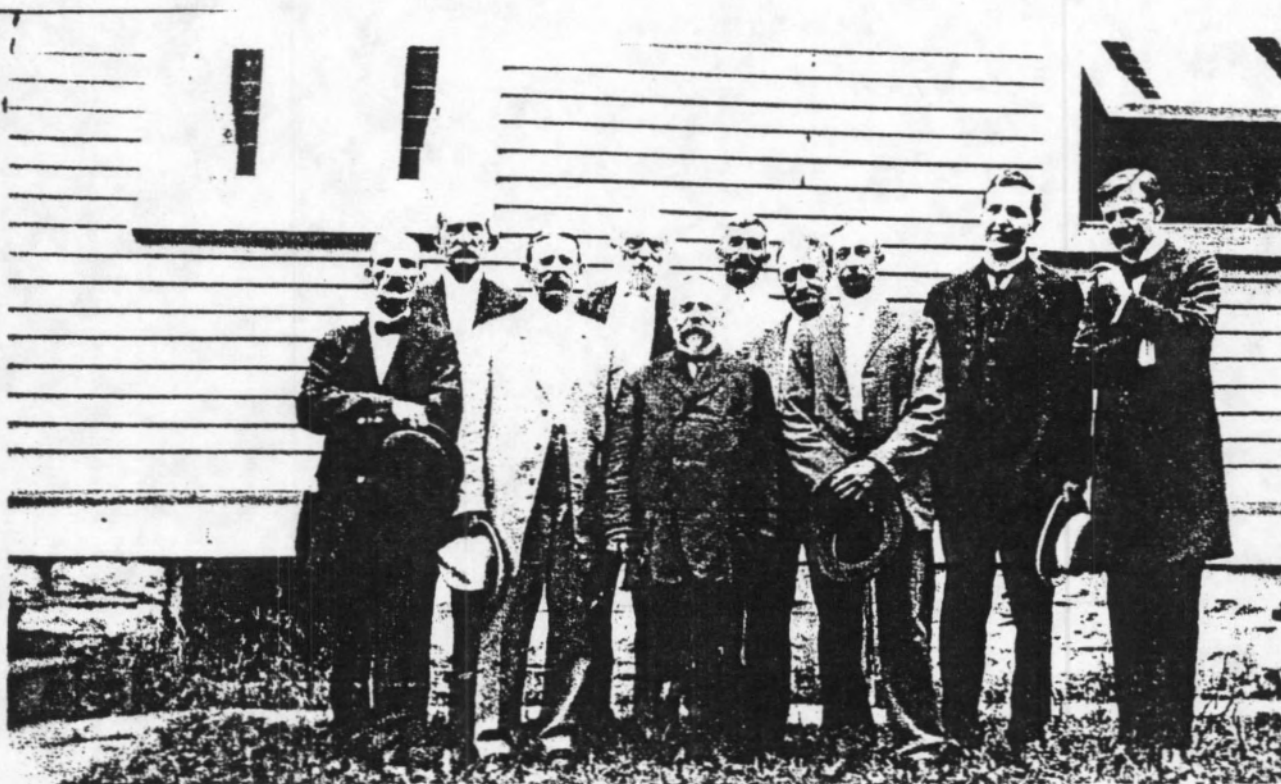
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Peace Congregation Founders on the south side of their new church (courtesy of Olive Chapel A. M. E.)



### *friedensgemeinde* — 1916

Left Rear: Theo. Bopp, Peter Bopp Sr., Bill Bopp, Wm. F. Koch

Front: Henry Gayer, Geo. Roeder, Pastor Christian Volk (Aug 1896 — 1905), Wm. ("Red Bill") Bopp,  
Pastor Walther Weidhaas (1915 — Oct. 1916), R. Amet

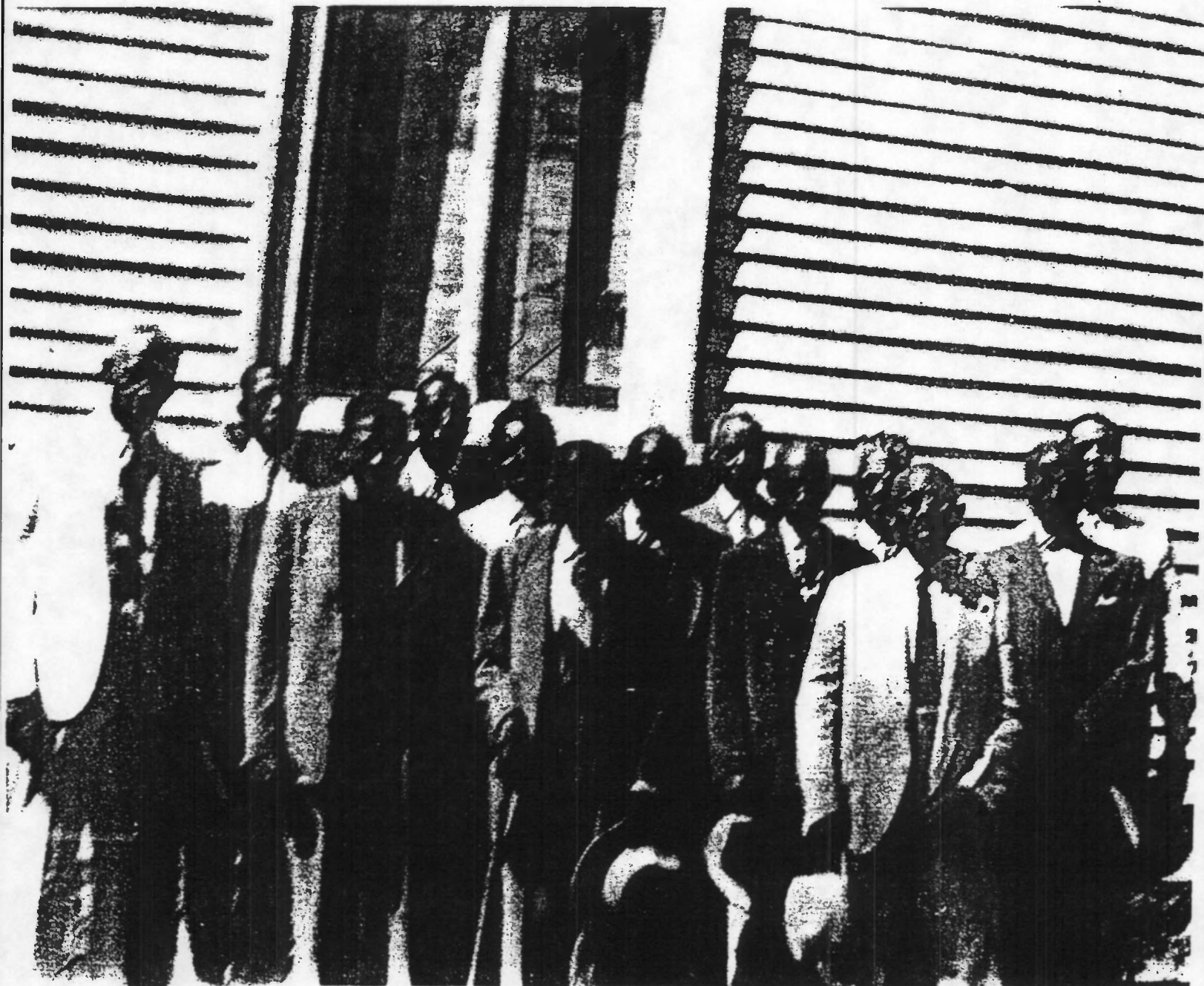
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Founders of Olive Chapel A. M. E. (courtesy of Olive Chapel A. M. E.)



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### Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the iron rod at the southwest corner of the intersection of Harrison Avenue and Monroe Avenue, extend westerly in a line parallel to Monroe Avenue 95 feet, thence southerly parallel to Harrison Avenue 70 feet, thence easterly 95 feet to Harrison Avenue, and northerly 70 feet to the point of beginning.

### Boundary Justification

These boundaries incorporate all of the historic building and the adjacent ground on the street elevations and south side of the property (the other side elevation). Originally the church's property was a lot that was 150 feet deep along Monroe Avenue and 125 wide along Harrison Avenue, with the church building positioned near the northeast corner of the lot. In recent years, additional property to the south has been incorporated into the legal description of the property, including an older bungalow now used as church offices, but it does not have any historic significance associated with the church. A ranch house constructed as the church parsonage in 1960 extends across the back (west end) of the larger property, but this is now slated for demolition as part of pending church expansion plans. The verbal boundaries selected above incorporate only the historic church building and adjacent ground, the area that will not be involved in the expansion plans and that does not include either of the residential buildings.

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### Photo Log

Photographer: Todd Owyong  
August 2002

Negatives with photographer: Karen Bode Baxter, 5811 Delor Street, St. Louis, MO 63109

- Photo #1: Exterior, east and north elevations, facing southwest
- Photo #2: Exterior, south and east elevations, facing northwest
- Photo #3: Exterior, north and west elevations, facing southeast
- Photo #4: Exterior, detail of belfry, facing southwest
- Photo #5: Exterior, detail of entry door facing west
- Photo #6: Interior: detail of stained glass transom with "A.M.E. Olive Chapel" from interior of entry looking east
- Photo #7: Interior: detail of belfry looking up at trap door
- Photo #8: Interior, sanctuary, looking east
- Photo #9: Interior, sanctuary, looking west
- Photo #10: Interior, basement meeting room, looking east northeast

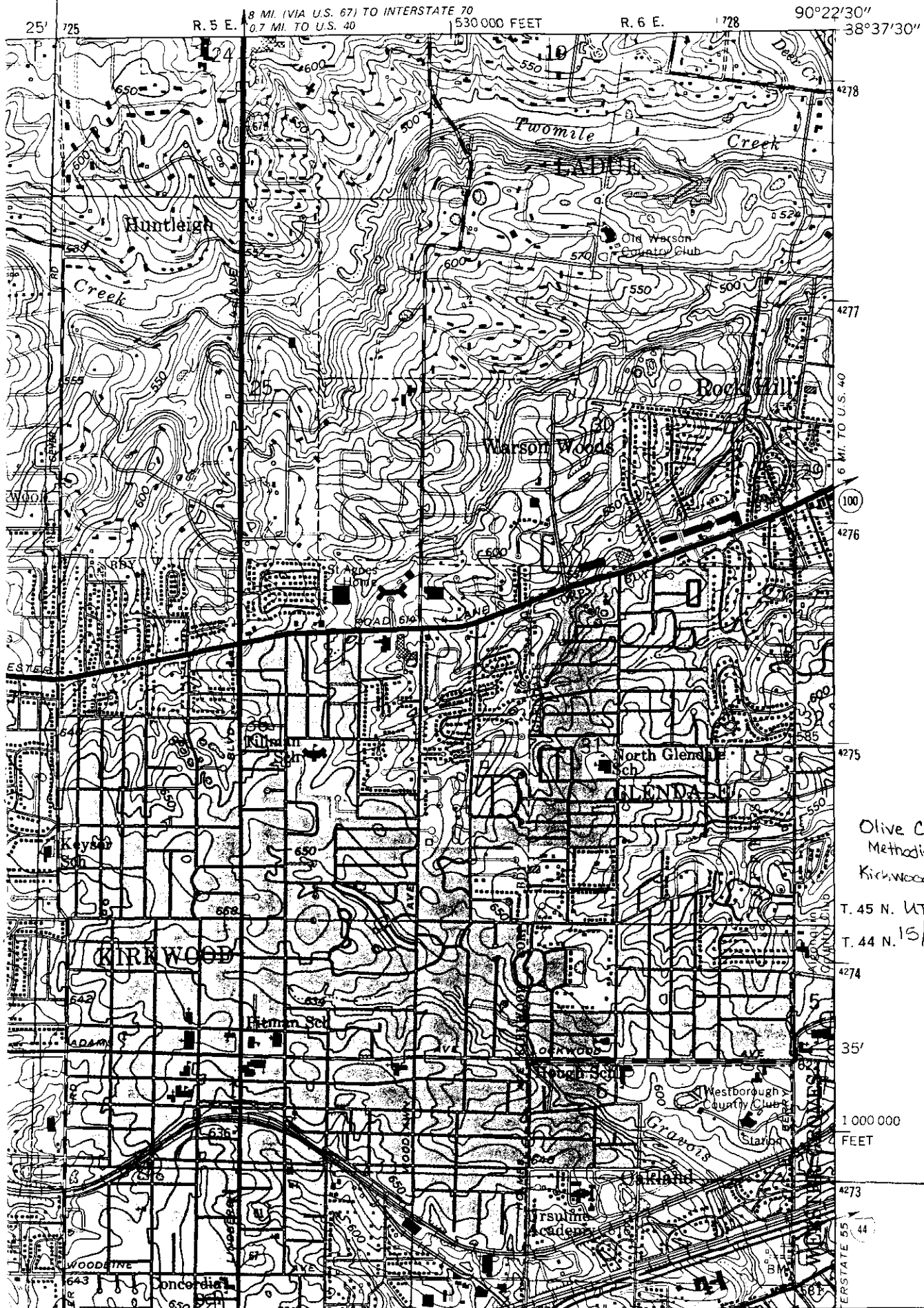


# KIRKWOOD QUADRANGLE

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Kirkwood St. Louis County

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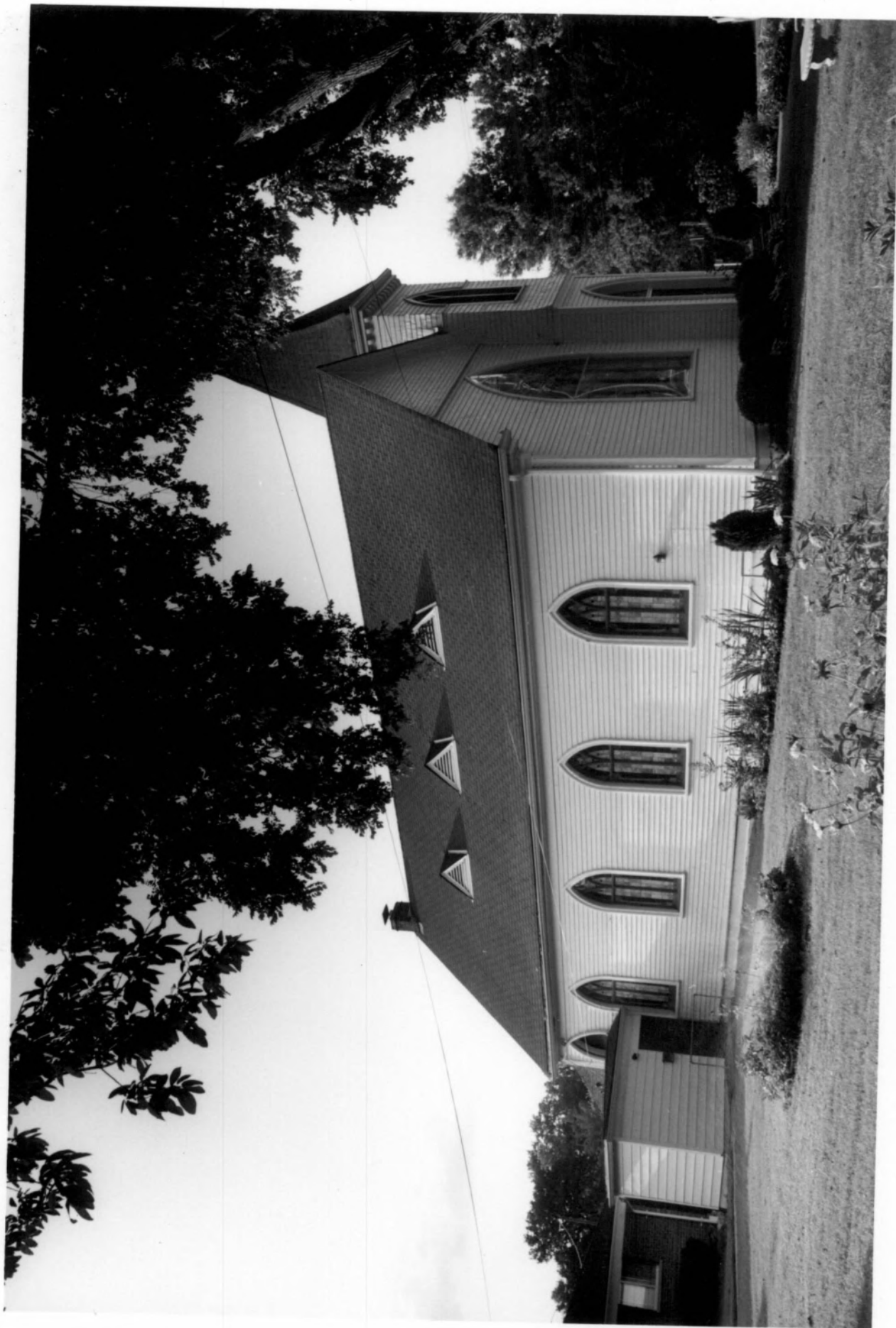
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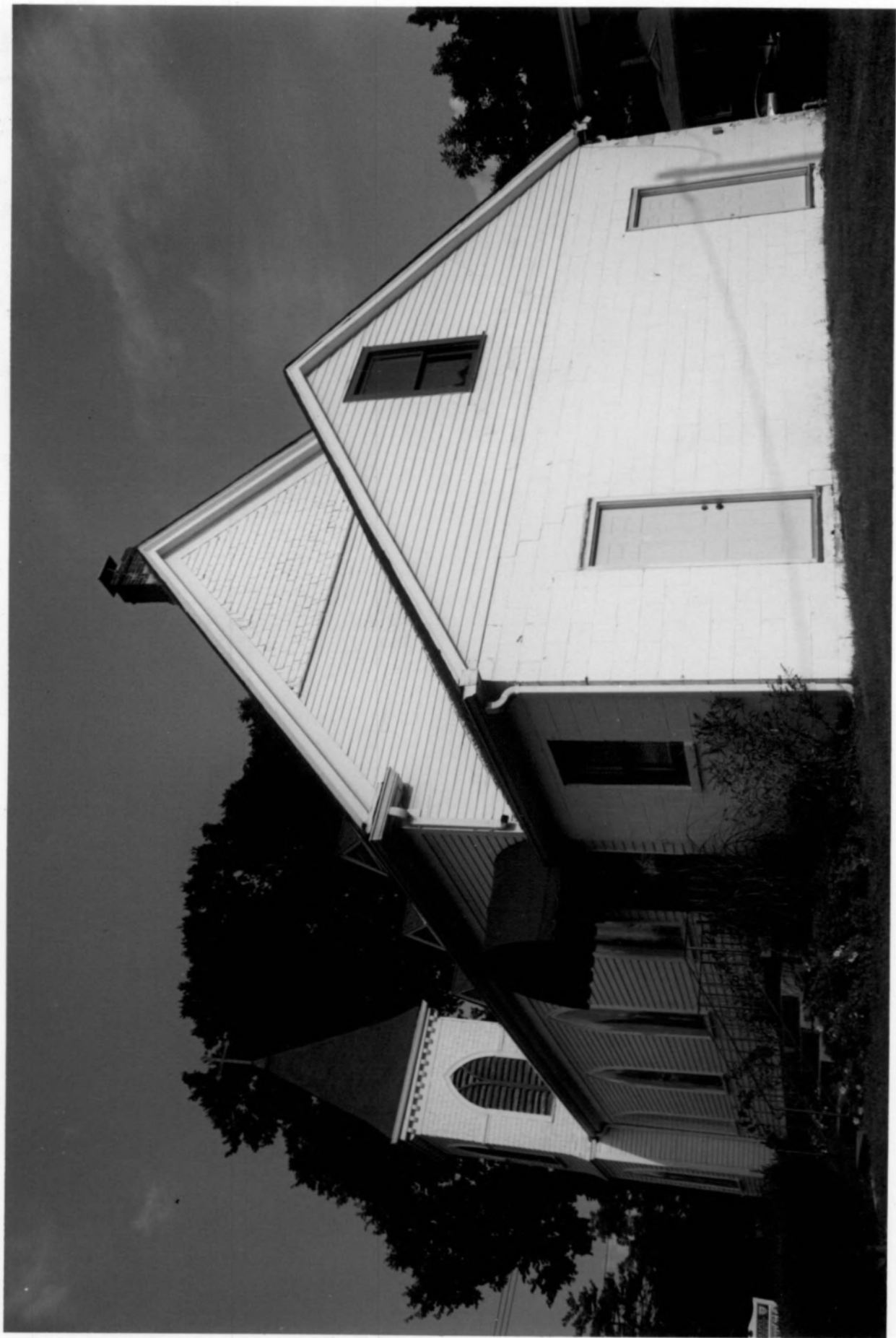
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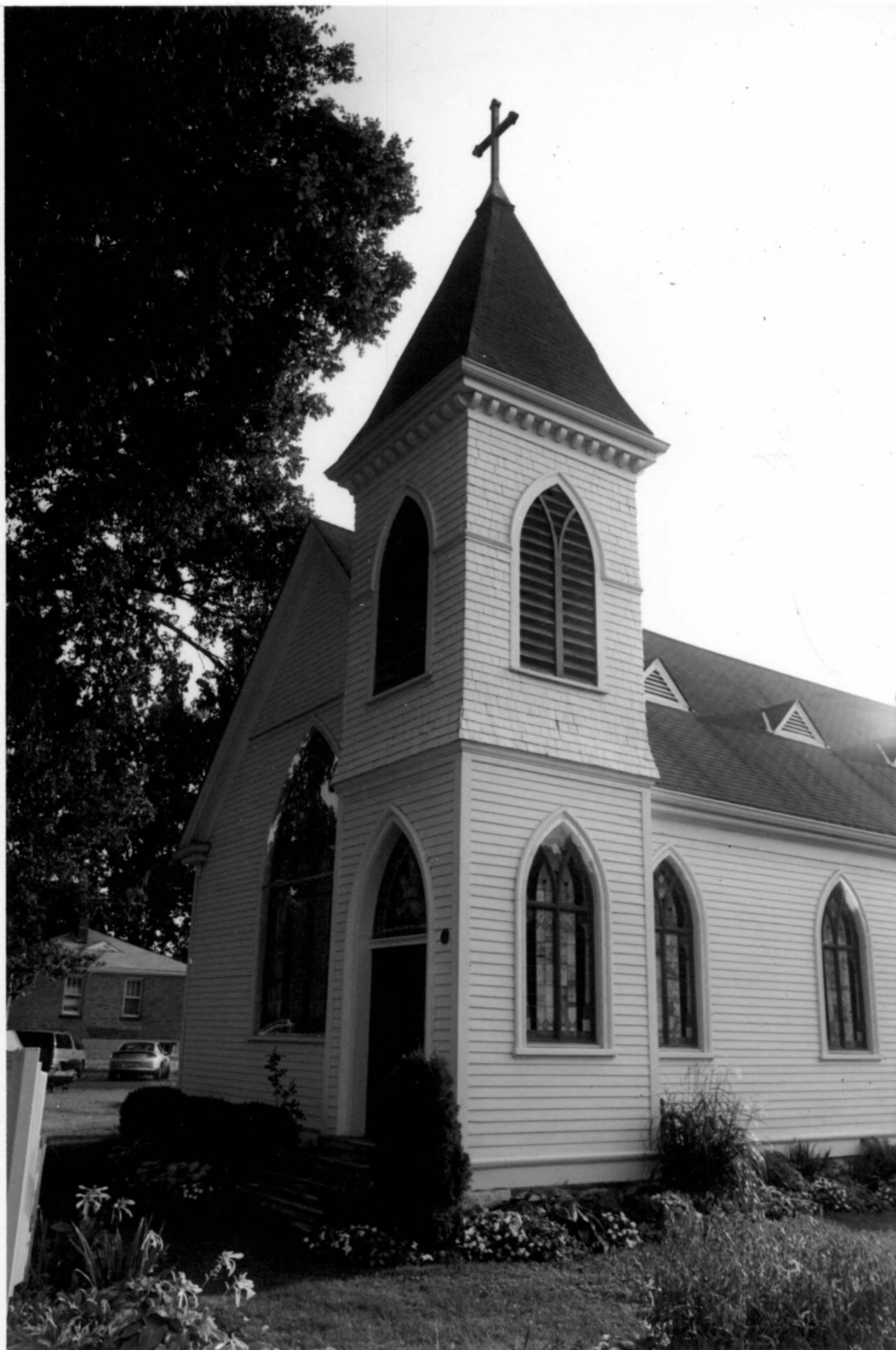
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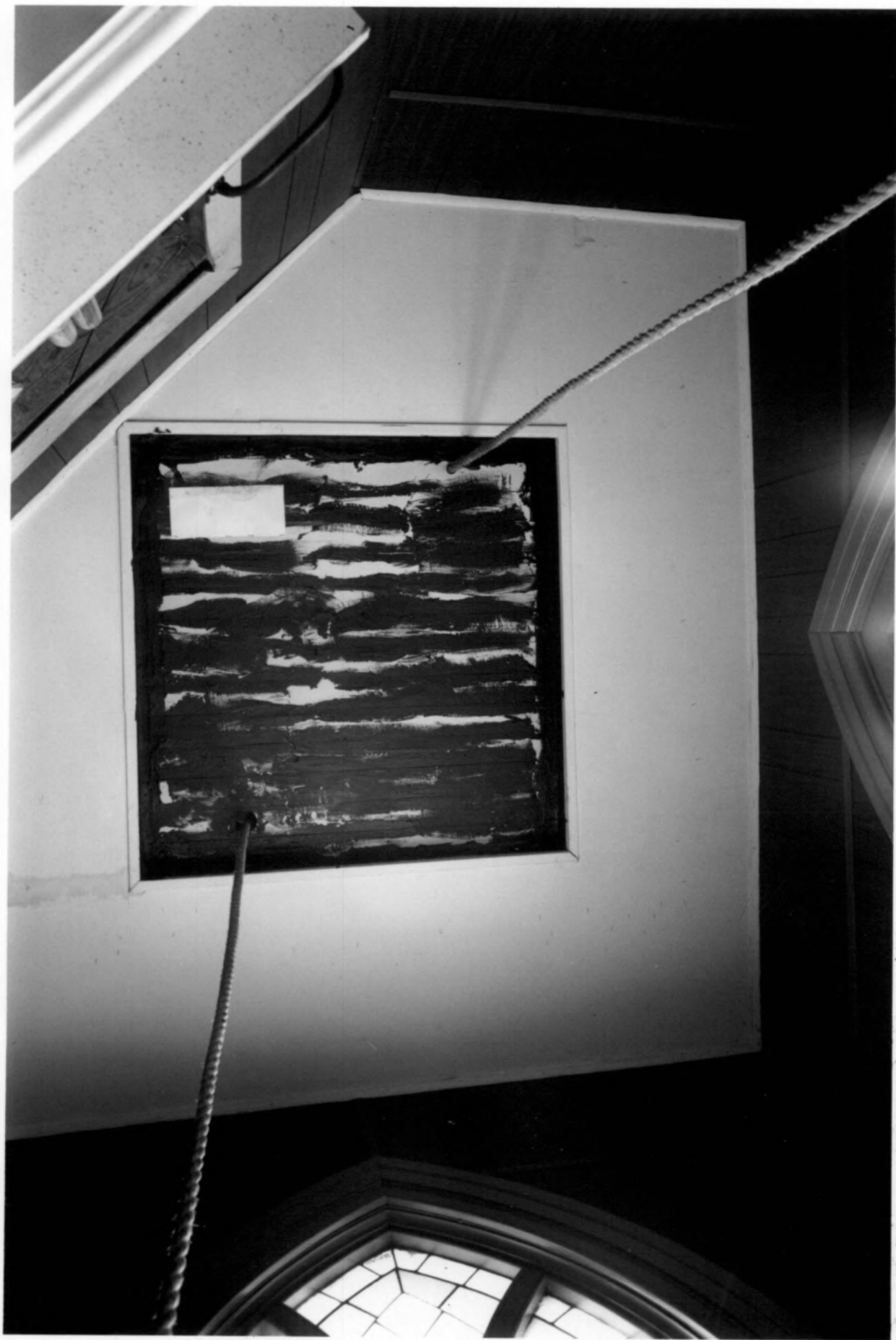












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